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**NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL
FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES**

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**To: Chief Fire Officers
Chief Executives/Clerks to Fire Authorities
Chairs of Fire Authorities
Directors of Human Resources at Fire Authorities**

Members of the National Joint Council

10 June 2008

CIRCULAR NJC/11/08

SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE

Dear Sir/Madam,

1. The National Joint Council recognises the importance of developing and retaining a skilled and qualified workforce, enabling employees to attain the skills necessary to develop and achieve their professional ambitions and assisting fire and rescue services to continuously improve organisational performance.
2. The National Joint Council encourages fire and rescue services to commit to:
 - Actively encourage and support employees to gain the skills and qualifications that will support their career development, future employability and meet the needs of the organisation;
 - Actively encourage and support employees to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, and work towards at least their first full Level 2 qualification in an area that is relevant to the organisation;
 - Demonstrably raise employees' skills and competencies to enhance their personal development and improve the organisational performance of fire and rescue services through investing in economically valuable training and development.
3. Fire and Rescue Services in England are further encouraged to support the *Skills Pledge*, which is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of an organisation to encourage and support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant qualifications to at least a Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs).

4. It is understood that administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland have also explored *Skills Strategies* and fire and rescue services in those administrations are encouraged to support the outcome of such work, similarly committing to the aims identified in paragraph 2 above, including equivalent qualification levels.
5. The Welsh Assembly has agreed a National Basic Skills Strategy for Wales which encourages adoption of the *Basic Skills Employers Pledge*. The Pledge aims to improve the standards of language, literacy and numeracy of adults through specific support for the workplace. As such the National Joint Council encourages fire and rescue services in Wales to actively support the *Pledge* in order to similarly commit to the aims identified in paragraph 2 above, including equivalent qualification levels
6. Unions play an important role in engaging and supporting learners in the workplace and key to this is the role of Union Learning Representatives. Initiatives such as the *Skills Pledge* will assist unions and employers in promoting joint commitment and action on skills in the workplace.
7. Further information in respect of the skills strategies referred to above can be found on the following internet links:

<http://inourhands.lsc.gov.uk/employersSkillsPledge.html>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0>

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/successthroughskills.htm>

http://www.basic-skills-wales.org/bsastrategy/en/post_16/employer_pledge.cfm

Yours faithfully

SARAH MESSENGER

MATT WRACK

Joint Secretaries